

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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FREEZE OF HEATING ASSISTANCE FUNDING THREATENS TO LEAVE FAMILIES OUT IN THE COLD

Markey notes 40% increase in cost, almost 20% decrease in government assistance

Washington, D. C. – Today Rep. Edward J. Markey joined a bipartisan group of 81 lawmakers in sending a letter to President Bush requesting action to ensure the availability of funds for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Specifically, the letter requested an immediate release of \$300 million in available contingency LIHEAP funds to the states, support of \$1.7 billion in regular LIHEAP funding for Fiscal Year 2003, and at least that funding level in the Fiscal Year 2004 budget. The letter is being sent in response to an overall funding freeze for LIHEAP at \$1.4 billion down from last year's \$1.7 billion appropriation.

"State budgets are in their worst condition since World War II, and unless President Bush agrees to release emergency LIHEAP funding, New England families who rely on heating assistance are going to be left out in the cold this winter," said Rep. Markey

"Like this year's early snow, LIHEAP funding is falling, but at the same time, heating costs and unemployment are rising.

The Energy Information Agency has predicted that a New England household will see a 40 percent increase in home heating costs this winter as compared to last. Massachusetts will try to retain the number of households served by reducing its maximum benefit by almost 20 percent.

Rep. Markey concluded, "If the Bush Administration fails to make sufficient funding available for LIHEAP, many low-income families could be faced with the stark choice of heating or eating. It is shameful that American families are forced to make such choices by a government that chooses itself to make trillion dollar tax cuts to wealthy individuals rather than fund the needs of the poor."

The complete letter is available at www.house.gov/markey.

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